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Sen. Hardiman's committee OK's Human Services budget

LANSING – Under the leadership of Sen. Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood, the Senate appropriations subcommittee reported the Department of Human Services' budget nearly \$18 million below the governor's recommendation, while still protecting Michigan's vulnerable. It would fund the department for the 2006 fiscal year budget with about \$4.4 billion.

Hardiman's subcommittee recommended reducing spending by preventing of waste and abuse, encouraging privatization of services, and streamlining services to prevent duplication.

"This proposal moves away from the concept of funding programs toward one focused on purchasing services," Hardiman said. "We want to put emphasis on spending for those services that will bring the best outcomes and results for Michigan's vulnerable citizens at a price the state can afford."

"I am proud of this budget, I think we accomplished some really great things, such as additional money for marriage, fatherhood and specialized foster care programs as well as limiting unnecessary government bureaucracy," Hardiman said. "This budget does its part in closing the \$375 million General Fund deficit by reducing the governor's recommended spending levels by nearly \$18 million. It is not fun having to reduce funding, but during these tough economic times it is necessary – I think my reductions are fair."

The Department of Human Services is the state agency formerly called the Family Independence Agency. The department's budget as reported and recommended by the subcommittee would spend \$1.1 billion from state resources and about \$17.9 million less than what the governor proposed. The total budget, which includes money from federal programs, would be about \$32.6 million less.

Among other results, the following was recommended by the subcommittee Hardiman leads:

- \$500,000 each for marriage and fatherhood programs;
- New language that would help local Friend of the Court offices by improving the computer system that is used to track child support payments for families; and
- Revised language to require the department to develop a plan to provide client-centered results-oriented programs and services for day care assistance, the Family Independence Program, adoption, foster care, and prevention services which will include identifying measurable performance indicators, monitored results, goals, and innovations to be presented during the annual budget presentation.

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